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ABSTRACT

Students majoring in home economics education were studied to see if any change in attitude occurred following a course on teaching learners with special needs. The categories of special needs learners were: physically handicapped, emotionally disturbed, hearing and visually impaired, urban, rural, and Indian disadvantaged, and the educable mentally retarded. The study revealed: (1) Subjects perceived themselves to be more competent in teaching special needs learners at the completion of the course; (2) A relationship was found between cognitive knowledge, the development of appropriate teaching skills, and more positive attitudes toward special needs learners; (3) There was an increased desire to teach physically handicapped learners, but a decreased desire to teach in a school near an Indian reservation; (4) There was a relationship between desire to teach and attitudes for some categories of special needs learners; (5) Subjects' scores on the scales of tolerance did not increase significantly; and (6) Positive attitudes toward special needs learners increased significantly in some cases. Implications for inservice and preservice teacher education are reported. (Author/JD)

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FINAL REPORT

MEASURING ATTITUDE CHANGE TOWARD SPECIAL NEEDS LEARNERS

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Fargo, North Dakota 58105

August 1979

Project No. 78-1
Supported by the College of Home Economics
Research and Development Fund
NDSU Foundation
North Dakota State University
Fargo, North Dakota 58105

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to see if any change in attitude of preservice teachers toward special needs learners occurred and in what direction the change occurred at the conclusion of a course on teaching learners with special needs. Subjects for the study were students enrolled in Teaching Learners with Special Needs (HEEd 477) in the College of Home Economics during the spring quarter of 1978. The study used a pre-test, treatment, post-test design with the treatment consisting of three methods of attitude change - affective experiences, cognitive experiences, and modeling. Analyses of the data revealed the following results: (1) subjects perceived themselves to be more competent in teaching special needs students at the completion of the course; (2) there appeared to be a relationship between cognitive knowledge, the development of appropriate teaching skills, and more positive attitudes toward special needs students; (3) subjects reported a significantly increased desire to teach physically handicapped and deaf learners and a significantly decreased desire to teach in a school near an Indian reservation; (4) there was a relationship between desire to teach and attitude for some, but not all, categories of special needs learners; (5) subjects' scores on the scales of tolerance did not increase significantly; and (6) attitudes towards special needs learners increased significantly in some cases but not in all cases. Implications for inservice and preservice teacher education were reported.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Mainstreaming, the inclusion of handicapped students in regular classes, is becoming a reality for teachers since P.L. 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, was signed into law in 1975. The "least restrictive environment" aspect of the law mandates schools to educate handicapped students in as normal a school setting as possible (Hayes & Higgens, 1978, p. 268). This means that many students who were formerly served in special education classes will now be educated in regular classes with their nonhandicapped peers, even if for only part of a day. Their teachers will be regular classroom teachers, not special education teachers, although the special education teachers are to serve as resource and support personnel (Birch, 1974, p. 1).

Home economics classes will be a logical placement for handicapped students. These classes have much to offer handicapped persons because home economics concepts and skills help people cope with the environment and therefore become more independent or able to be in charge of their own lives. The trend away from institutionalization of handicapped citizens requires that they learn these life skills in order to be able to function on their own in a nonhandicapped world. Therefore, if the student is able to be in a regular classroom, even if for only part of a day, home economics classes are logical choices for placement.

Secondly, home economics is a part of vocational education. Vocational education has been specifically mandated to provide education for the handicapped under P.L. 94-142. Vocational education is a part of the definition of special education and vocational education is especially emphasized in the section of the law concerning the availability of program options for handicapped students (Razeghi & Davis, 1979, pp. 353-354).

In addition, the Education Amendments of 1976 (P.L. 94-482) have given vocational education specific guidelines to provide programs for special needs students. Learners with special needs are defined as students with academic or economic disadvantages or with any of the following categories of handicaps (the same categories as defined in P.L. 94-142): mentally retarded, hard of hearing, deaf, speech impaired, visually handicapped, seriously emotionally disturbed, orthopedically impaired, other health impaired, or have specific learning disabilities (Federal Register, 1977, p. 53864). Vocational educators are to make extra efforts to see that the needs of these learners are met. Funding categories are established in the rules and regulations of the law to help local school districts with the extra costs of educating these students.

But in order for the special needs learner to profit from inclusion in regular classes, the teacher must be prepared to educate the child, not just have the student in class. A crucial factor in being able to effectively educate the child is teacher attitude toward the student. In fact, the attitude of the teacher may be a far more important variable than any administrative or curricular scheme according to Mitchell (1976, p. 302).

The attitude of the teacher appears to be related to student self-concept and achievement. The self-fulfilling prophecy, as put forth by

Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968), has been adequately documented (Algozzine, Mercer, & Countermine, 1977; Braun, 1976; Henrickson, 1971). Research has shown that teachers often have negative attitudes towards their disadvantaged and handicapped students, and that this negative attitude has adverse effects on students' self-concepts and school performance (Abeson & Zettel, 1977, p. 118; Foster, Ysseldyke, & Reese, 1975). Therefore, in order to assist students in reaching their full potential, teachers need to have positive attitudes toward all students, disadvantaged and handicapped included.

Can attitudes be changed in a positive direction through preservice teacher education? Raths, Harmin, and Simon (1978) reported on a number of research studies which employed values clarification techniques as treatment and in which it was concluded that attitudes were changed in a positive direction. Ringness (1975) states that cognitive learning can produce attitudinal change, and that the teacher can serve as a model of the kind of behavior he/she wishes to have students emulate. A study by Buttery and Reisman (1978) found that attitudes changed following a course on exceptional children but changed in a negative direction. Differences between pre- and post-test scores on three factors of a semantic differential showed more negative attitudes toward exceptional students on the post-test. However, the course focused on the etiology of exceptionalities and did not contain an affective component (Buttery, 1978). This would lead one to believe that an affective component would be a necessary part of any attempt to change attitudes in a positive direction.

The purpose of the present study was to see if any change in attitude of preservice teachers toward special needs learners occurred and in what direction the change occurred at the conclusion of a course on teaching

learners with special needs. The basic design of the study was pre-test, treatment, post-test with the treatment consisting of three methods of attitude change. In addition, subjects' perceived feelings of competency in teaching special needs learners were measured by the same pre-test, post-test design in order to see if any correlation existed between feelings of competency and attitude toward students. The subjects were students enrolled in the course Teaching Learners with Special Needs (HLEd 477).

The results of this study could be useful to teacher educators and state supervisors as they structure preservice and inservice teacher education courses. It appears that an accepting attitude on the part of the teacher is essential in effective education. If teachers are unaccepting of students, the success of mainstreaming is lessened and the special needs students will not gain the right to an appropriate, non-restrictive education as was intended by the recent Federal legislation.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH

The literature on teacher attitude and attitude change was examined. A selection of the most pertinent literature is reported.

Teacher Attitude

Teacher expectations and the effect of these expectations is a topic which has and continues to generate much research (Braun, 1976). Experiments by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) highlighted this phenomenon and brought it to national attention. Although these experiments generated much criticism, summaries of studies of teacher attitude (Braun, 1976; Alexander & Strain, 1978) lend support to this theory. Several studies show that naturally occurring variables do seem to affect teacher expectations of students. Further, it is not any one variable that affects expectations but rather the interaction between variables and across teacher-learner variables. Possible variables could be communications about students received from other teachers, administrators, and parents; cumulative records; previously established behavioral records; standardized test information; physical characteristics such as sex and attractiveness; motivation; socio-economic status; ethnicity; the child's name; and knowledge of siblings (Braun, 1976, pp. 190-191, 206).

These teacher expectations, triggered by any variables such as those just mentioned, begin a cycle. Teacher's expectations of students determine

in part how the teacher reacts toward those students. Studies cited by Alexander and Strain (1978) showed that teachers acted differently when they were with students classified as high scholastic achievers than with students who were low scholastic achievers. They spent less time, interacted verbally in less positive and supportive ways, showed less instructional clarity, gave contradictory messages with regard to permitted behavior, used more sarcasm and threats, and were more likely to accept poor performance and less likely to praise good performance when it occurred with students perceived to be low achievers.

Students in turn behave according to the expectations they perceive others hold about them and this can have a bearing on both self-image and school performance. ". . . there is a close relationship between the teacher's expectations for the learner, the teacher's treatment (output) of the learner, and ultimately, the child's self-expectation. This expectation of self is inseparable from his self-image. A complimentary factor in the relationship between self-image and performance (learner output) may be the degree to which the learner risks responding and the degree to which he persists in trying" (Braun, 1976, p. 205). This behavior then confirms the teacher's expectations, becoming the self-fulfilling prophecy.

When teachers hold positive expectations of students, and students then live up to these expectations, a situation exists which is advantageous to the student. However, when expectations are negative, a situation exists whereby students are prevented from reaching full potential. Unfortunately, this is often the case for disadvantaged and handicapped students. A summary of research studies by Henrickson (1971) indicated that teachers often feel disadvantaged students are not as capable of learning and therefore

they do not try as hard to teach them. The same expectations were found to be true of handicapped persons. In reviewing the whole issue of attitudes toward the mentally retarded, Gottlieb (1974) concluded that in general, regular classroom teachers do not hold particularly positive attitudes toward exceptional students. Alexander and Strain (1978) supported this conclusion in their review of studies of educators' attitudes toward the handicapped. Foster, Ysseldyke, and Reese (1975) found that exceptional children labels assigned to children may generate negative teacher expectations when compared to children who are classified as normal. In a survey of attitudes of vocational teachers in North Carolina, Hughes (1978) found the teachers to be neither highly accepting nor highly rejecting of handicapped persons. The mean score for the sample group on the Attitude Toward Handicapped Individuals Scale was 76.4835, with occupational home economics teachers having the lowest mean ($\bar{X}$=73.9661). The author of the scale has suggested that scores below 70 indicate less acceptance and understanding and scores above 70 indicate greater acceptance and understanding (Hughes, 1978, pp. 76-77).

Other studies have examined teachers' attitudes toward the concept of mainstreaming. Alexander and Strain (1978) reviewed a number of these studies and concluded that regular classroom teachers were not supportive of mainstreaming, feeling that handicapped children did not have the ability to succeed in a regular class, that they would be disruptive, or that they would not be accepted by normal children. Results of a study conducted by Moore and Fine (1978) showed that 50% of regular classroom teachers were opposed to putting retarded children in regular classes. Hughes' (1978) findings were similar. The vocational teachers in North Carolina were not

highly supportive of the idea of mainstreaming, although they were not highly rejecting either.

Regular classroom teachers appear to have negative attitudes toward disadvantaged and handicapped students and toward the concept of mainstreaming. These negative attitudes could then have an adverse effect on the self-concept and achievement of these students. Therefore, these studies reinforce the importance of dealing with teacher attitudes as a crucial factor in providing special needs students with equal and non-restrictive environments for learning.

Attitude Change

"Attitudes are emotionally toned predispositions to react in a consistent way, favorable or unfavorable, toward a person, object, or idea" (Ringness, 1975, p. 22). Although attitudes are fairly stable, they can be changed. Several methods of changing attitudes have been identified. Methods pertinent to the treatment designed for this study were examined further.

Humanistic education is providing learning environments where students are stimulated to develop to their fullest extent in their own way (Ringness, 1975, p. 21). One humanistic approach is values clarification techniques which have been employed in attempts to change attitudes. Raths et al. (1978) reported on several such studies in which changes occurred in attitudes toward learning as evidenced by increased enthusiasm and interest in the subject following value clarification techniques. Such techniques encourage participants to examine how they think and feel about various alternatives and come up with their own solutions. Attitudes are not forced on them.

Other humanistic techniques include role reversal which allows participants to get the feel of what it is like to experience the other person's role (Ringness, 1975, p. 150). Simulation games involve people in roles with the same results as role reversal. Gordon's Synectics Strategy (Joyce & Weil, 1972) is designed to break a stereotype and develop feelings of empathy.

These types of humanistic techniques have been employed in attempts to change attitudes of teachers toward the handicapped. Cohen (1977) enumerated a number of workshops or training sequences designed to develop empathy for the handicapped. The use of such techniques was part of a workshop for elementary teachers learning to teach handicapped students in regular classes. Pre- to post-test gains on the Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory were significant at the .02 level of confidence using a t test for related measures (Glass & Meckler, 1972).

Cognitive information is another way of attempting to change attitudes. According to Ringness (1975, p. 24), "We can use cognitive means to bring about affective learning, since learning about something, such as the Black Experience, can produce attitudinal change." The acquisition of specific educational skills which could be applied in a mainstreamed classroom situation appeared to be related to improved attitudes toward exceptional children (Glass & Meckler, 1972; "Teaching Teachers to Teach," 1968). In a study conducted by Higgs (1975, p. 497), "Attitudes toward disabled persons became more positive as information levels increased."

A third component is modeling. As explained by Ringness (1975), this involves vicarious learning whereby people can model or imitate both specific behaviors and more general patterns of behavior. Teachers may be models,

although they are not as strong a model as either family or peers. If all models have the same attitudes, these attitudes are more likely to be accepted as one's own than if models are displaying conflicting attitudes.

In light of the literature on teacher attitude and attitude change, the following research questions were designed for this project:

1. What change occurs in preservice teachers' perceived feelings of competency and what is the direction of that change following a course on teaching learners with special needs?

2. What change occurs in preservice teachers' attitudes toward special needs learners and what is the direction of this change following a course on teaching learners with special needs?

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE

The procedures used to answer the research questions are reported in this section.

Hypotheses

The study tested the following null hypotheses:

Hypothesis I

There will be no difference in preservice teachers' perceived feelings of competency to teach special needs learners following a course on teaching learners with special needs.

Hypothesis II

There will be no difference in preservice teachers' attitudes toward special needs learners following a course on teaching learners with special needs.

Procedures for the testing of the hypotheses including a description of the sample, data collection and instrumentation, and data analysis follow.

Sample

The sample consisted of students enrolled in Home Economics Education 477, Teaching Learners with Special Needs, in the College of Home Economics at North Dakota State University during the spring quarter of 1978. The subjects were all females. They were all juniors and seniors majoring in Home Economics Education except for two students. One was a graduate student

in Home Economics Education without prior secondary teaching experience. The other was a graduate of North Dakota State University in Home Economics Education with approximately two years of secondary teaching experience, but who was not currently teaching. Some but not all subjects had completed a nine-week student teaching experience. All subjects were in their early twenties except for one undergraduate student who was in her early thirties and had school-age children. Only those subjects who completed both forms of the instrument were included in the sample; therefore, on one test the n=32 and on the other test the n=31.

Treatment

The independent variable, the treatment, consisted of the following three methods of attitude change as explained by Ringness (1975). They were the major components of the teaching-learning activities of the course, Teaching Learners with Special Needs.

Affective experiences. Because the study previously cited by Buttery and Reisman (1978) found that change occurred in a negative direction without an affective component, and because humanistic techniques are one method of changing attitudes (Ringness, 1975), this component was considered to be essential. Affective experiences such as the following were included in the course:

1. Values continuum. This is a values clarification technique, the purpose of which is to open the range of alternatives possible on a given issue. This helps one move away from dichotomous thinking, and also encourages one to make a public affirmation of his/her opinions and beliefs (Simon, Howe, & Kirschenbaum, 1972, p. 116). In this activity subjects publicly

stated their position as a middle-class teacher on a continuum between promoting and teaching only lower-class values and promoting and teaching only middle-class values when students hold generally lower-class values. After a group discussion of the consequences to students and teachers of various positions, subjects again stated their position explaining when they had or had not changed their views.

2. Ghetto, a simulation game. In this game participants assume roles of ghetto dwellers and try to invest their time (chips) to earn a living (points) according to the rules of the game. It allows participants to experience what it is like to live under these circumstances and, as is true of games, do so in a non-threatening situation (Pearson & Marfuggi, 1975). This commercially produced game is available from Western Publishing Company, Inc., 850 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10023.

3. Gordon's Synectics Strategy. This strategy uses analogies to help participants reach creative solutions. It can be used to break a stereotype and develop empathy for a concept (Joyce & Weil, 1972, chap. 14). In this instance the concept used to begin the strategy was "a disadvantaged person."

4. Awareness experiences. The primary purpose of this type of experience is to help individuals become more aware of the feelings of others (Joyce & Weil, 1972, chap. 15). In one experience subjects were first assigned to either an A or B group. Then a pair of words was stated such as hot-cold or chocolate-strawberry. Subjects were directed to move to one place in the room if they were more like one word (i.e., hot) and another place if they were more like the other word (i.e., cold). Persons in the A group were instructed to ignore persons in the B group while those in the B group were to try to interact with persons in the A group and explain why

they were like the word they had chosen. Each group's directions were unknown to persons in the other group.

In a second experience small groups were given puzzles to put together. Some puzzles had large pieces and were simple; other puzzles had small pieces, some of which were missing. Those groups which could put their puzzles together quickly were verbally rewarded while those who had difficulty were belittled. Debriefing discussions were held following each experience.

Cognitive experiences. Since cognitive learning can contribute to affective learning, the cognitive component of the course was considered as part of the treatment. Cognitive aspects included acquisition of information by the students through readings, presentation of information by the instructor, and opportunities to practice teaching skills. Practice included such experiences as determining the reading level of materials, rewriting material to reduce the reading level, and planning learning activities congruent with the learning styles of disadvantaged and handicapped students.

Modeling by the teacher. Although this is not thought to be a major method of changing attitudes for students of college age, its possible effect on attitude change cannot be ignored; therefore, the instructor attempted to be a model of positive attitudes towards special needs learners.

Data Collection and Instrumentation

The change in attitude and in perceived feelings of competency between pre- and post-tests were the dependent variables. The instruments assessing these variables were administered during the first and last sessions of the class with the same instruments given as both pre- and post-tests. In each

case the subjects were advised that the data would not be used to evaluate their individual performance in the course. The instruments described below were employed (see Appendix for samples of each instrument).

The instrument which assessed perceived feelings of competency consisted of ten short paragraphs describing teaching situations involving the following categories of disadvantaged and handicapped learners.

1. Three situations of disadvantaged students--urban with a mixed racial student body, rural North Dakota, and near a North Dakota Indian reservation with 50% American Indian student body.

2. Three situations involving mentally handicapped learners--one educable mentally retarded (EMR) student in a class of nonhandicapped students, a class of eight EMR students, and several EMR students in a class of nonhandicapped students.

3. Four situations, each with one handicapped student in a class of nonhandicapped students--the four handicaps were deaf, emotionally disturbed, visually impaired, and physically handicapped.

Each situation asked the respondents to assume they were teachers. They rated their feelings of competence in regard to each situation on a 5-point scale ranging from "competent or adequate to the task" to "incompetent or inadequate to the task." The instrument was scored as follows: For each of the 10 categories of special needs learners, each subject received a score corresponding to her placement on the rating scale, 1-5, with 5 being the most competent rating. In addition, a mean score for the three types of disadvantaged learner situations was assigned as well as a mean score for the three categories of educable mentally retarded learners.

Three instruments assessed attitudes. One was the same instrument just described. In addition to rating perceived feelings of competency, subjects rated their desire to teach in each of the ten situations on a 5-point scale ranging from "want to do this" to "not willing to do this." This part of the instrument was scored in the same manner described above except that no mean scores were assigned. Each subject received a score for each of the 10 categories of special needs learners corresponding to her placement on the rating scale, 1-5, with 5 being the most willing to teach in this situation.

The second instrument measured several aspects of tolerance. Tolerance is a generalized concept; a tolerant person is one who is free of prejudice or has a positive attitude. These scales assessed tolerance as this generalized concept rather than as attitude toward a specific handicap or disadvantage. These scales were developed by the Instructional Objectives Exchange ("Attitudes Related to Tolerance," 1971) and content validity has been established. The first part of the scale consisted of a series of statements about ethnic groups to which subjects indicated their reactions on a 5-point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree including a no opinion response. Some statements expressed stereotypes or generalizations about whole groups of people and some expressed the notion of individual variation. The scale measured subjects' acceptance or rejection of cultural stereotypes. The items fall into two categories--people and values--and so subscores were obtained for these categories ("Attitudes Related to Tolerance," 1971, p. 42). The second part of the scale contained 20 statements which expressed some proposed policy which perhaps "should" be instituted. Subjects were asked to indicate the extent to which they favored or were opposed to each policy on a 4-point scale from strongly in favor to strongly opposed.

Each policy reflected either a tolerant or an intolerant position regarding others' values and opinions as judged by a group of teachers and students as well as staff members of the Instructional Objectives Exchange ("Attitudes Related to Tolerance," 1971, p. 34). Scoring was as follows: For each item in the scale, subjects received the same number of points as their placement on the scale, either 1-5 or 1-4. For items that expressed tolerance, maximum points were given to responses of acceptance or agreement; where items expressed intolerance, responses of opposition to the statement received the greatest number of points. The order of some items was reversed to eliminate response set. Scores for each part of the scale--Group Description-People, Group Description-Values, Group Description-Total, and Policy Choice--were obtained by totaling the points received on each item in that subscale. The maximum score for each subscale was as follows: Group Description-Total=100; Group Description-People=50; Group Description-Values=50; Policy Choice=84. Higher scores indicated more tolerant attitudes.

The third instrument, a semantic differential, was used to measure the affective responses of the subjects toward nine types of special needs learners. This method of measurement is frequently used to measure attitudes and was chosen because it has been proven to be highly reliable and shown indication of adequate validity in a variety of research settings (Osgood, Succi, & Tannenbaum, 1957). In the instrument used for this study the semantic space consisted of 12 adjective pairs covering the activity, evaluative, and potency factors with the same 12 pairs used for each of the nine types of learners. This was essentially the same instrument used by Buttery and Reisman (1978) to measure teachers' affective status toward mainstreamed exceptional children. Scoring was as follows: Each pair of adjectives

formed a 7-point scale. Each point on the scale was numbered 1-7 with 7 being the more positive adjective. Subjects' scores were determined by adding the numbers of their placement on the four scales for each factor. Thus, for each type of learner, subjects would have three scores, one per factor, with the maximum score for any one factor being 28.

Data Analysis

A t test for correlated means was used to test the significance of the difference between pre- and post-test scores on each of the three measures of the dependent variable. A Pearson Product-moment correlation coefficient (Pearson r) was used to test for a relationship between perceived feelings of competency and desire for the task and between perceived feelings of competency and change in attitude as measured by the semantic differential. Probability for all comparisons was set at the .05 confidence level.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results and the discussion of the results from the testing of each of the hypotheses will be presented. The results and discussion for Hypothesis II will be reported for each of the instruments administered.

Hypothesis I

> There will be no difference in preservice teachers' perceived feelings of competency to teach special needs learners following a course on teaching learners with special needs.

Hypothesis I was rejected. At the completion of the course, subjects perceived themselves to be significantly more competent at teaching each of the categories of special needs learners included in the instrument (see Table 1). This finding is not surprising. The main purpose of such a course is to increase students' competence in teaching special needs learners.

The data were analyzed further using a Pearson *r* to see if any relationship existed between competence and attitude. Results showed a strong, positive relationship between perceived feelings of competency scores and scores on desire to teach and on the semantic differential. Subjects who rated themselves high on competence also tended to rate themselves high on desire to teach that particular category of special needs learners and tended to have positive scores on the semantic differential except in one instance, that of competence to teach and the score on the semantic

Table 1. Comparisons of Pre- and Post-test Scores on Perceived Feelings of Competency to Teach Special Needs Learners (n = 31)

Category of Learner	Test	M	SD	M diff.	t
Disadvantaged	Pre-	2.10	.56		
	Post-	2.73	.70	+ .63	5.42***
Urban	Pre-	1.71	.69		
	Post-	2.29	.86	+ .58	3.65**
Rural	Pre-	2.42	.85		
	Post-	3.32	.90	+ .90	4.67***
Indian	Pre-	2.16	.82		
	Post-	2.58	.99	+ .42	2.27*
Educable Mentally Retarded (EMR)	Pre-	1.86	.89		
	Post-	2.88	.70	+1.02	6.75***
Several EMR in Regular Class	Pre-	1.84	1.00		
	Post-	2.84	.86	+1.00	4.95***
Class of 8 EMR	Pre-	1.83	1.13		
	Post-	2.87	.85	+1.04	5.85***
One EMR [illegible] Regular Class	Pre-	1.90	.91		
	Post-	2.93	.73	+1.03	5.85***
Visually Impaired	Pre-	1.90	.94		
	Post-	3.00	.86	+1.10	6.03***
Emotionally Disturbed	Pre-	1.97	.91		
	Post-	2.52	.96	+ .55	2.97**
Hearing Impaired	Pre-	1.39	.92		
	Post-	2.61	.99	+1.22	6.11***
Physically Handicapped	Pre-	2.52	.96		
	Post-	3.35	.61	+ .83	4.82***

*$p < .05 = 2.04$.
**$p < .01 = 2.75$.
***$p < .001 = 3.64$.

differential of the physically handicapped learners (see Table 2). It would seem then that there is a relationship between cognitive knowledge, the development of appropriate teaching skills, and more positive attitudes toward special needs learners. This supports earlier findings (Glass & Meckler, 1972; "Teaching Teachers to Teach," 1968).

Hypothesis II

> There will be no difference in preservice teachers' attitudes toward special needs learners following a course on teaching learners with special needs.

Hypothesis II was partially rejected. In some instances preservice teachers' attitudes did change significantly following a course on teaching learners with special needs. Results from each of the instruments administered are reported and discussed below.

Desire to teach. In comparing the pre- and post-test scores on the rating scale on desire to teach, it was found that at the completion of the course subjects reported a significantly increased desire to teach physically handicapped and deaf learners. They reported a significantly decreased desire to teach in a school near an Indian reservation with 50% American Indian students. No other significant changes occurred (see Table 3). The decrease in desire to teach near an Indian reservation could be related to the experiences in the class. A guest speaker shared her experiences in teaching home economics in a school on an Indian reservation. Her experiences were not encouraging although they were realistic. This raises the issue of promoting a positive attitude to the point where students have idealistic expectations about a situation. One needs to be positive yet realistic, as the person who enters a situation viewing it idealistically is unprepared for the difficulties that are bound to arise.

Table 2. Correlations Between Scores on Perceived Feelings of Competency and Scores on Desire to Teach and on Attitude for Six Categories of Special Needs Learners (n = 31)

	Categories of Learners					
	Disadvantaged	Educable Mentally Retarded	Emotionally Disturbed	Physically Handicapped	Visually Impaired	Hearing Impaired
	Perceived Feelings of Competency					
Desire to Teach	.382*	.713**	.449**	.607**	.650**	.618**
Attitude	.680**	.483**	.507**	.153	.607**	.419*

*$p < .05 = .355$.
**$p < .01 = .456$.

Table 3. Comparisons of Pre- and Post-test Scores on Desire to Teach Special Needs Learners (n = 31)

Category of Learner	M	SD	M diff.	t
Urban Disadvantaged				
Pre-	2.39	.84		
Post-	2.32	.87	- .07	.42
Rural Disadvantaged				
Pre-	3.13	.56		
Post-	3.13	.76	.0	.0
American Indian Disadvantaged				
Pre-	2.74	.68		
Post-	2.26	1.06	- .48	2.54*
Several Educable Mentally Retarded (EMR) in Regular Class				
Pre-	2.52	.96		
Post-	2.74	1.00	- .22	1.31
Class of Eight EMR				
Pre-	2.61	1.02		
Post-	2.71	1.04	+ .10	.47
One EMR in Regular Class				
Pre-	2.81	.70		
Post-	2.90	.79	+ .09	.83
Visually Impaired				
Pre-	2.97	.60		
Post-	3.10	.54	+ .13	1.07
Emotionally Disturbed				
Pre-	2.32	.91		
Post-	2.42	1.02	+ .10	.55
Hearing Impaired				
Pre-	2.42	.81		
Post-	3.03	.95	+ .61	2.91**
Physically Handicapped				
Pre-	3.10	.60		
Post-	3.35	.55	+ .25	2.49*

*$p < .05 = 2.04$.
**$p < .01 = 2.75$.

In reflecting on the class experiences, teaching the physically handicapped and deaf learners probably were viewed by the subjects as calling for fewer adaptations than for other learners, particularly the mentally retarded learner. This could explain the increase in desire to teach these learners. There also is some research evidence that the physically handicapped are viewed in a more positive manner than mentally handicapped persons (Moore & Fine, 1978; Panda & Bartel, 1972).

If one views desire as a measure of attitude, the assumption is that if one ranks oneself high in desire to teach a type of learner, one has a positive attitude toward that learner. This assumption could be questioned however. One may have a positive attitude toward a learner but because of feelings of inadequacy or other reasons may not want to teach this learner; therefore, the data were further analyzed using a Pearson r to determine if a relationship existed between desire to teach a particular kind of special needs learner and attitude toward that category of learner as measured by the semantic differential. Results are shown in Table 4. A strong, positive relationship existed in four out of six cases. It did not exist for physically handicapped and visually impaired learners.

Scales of tolerance. On each of the subscales of the scales of tolerance there was no significant difference between the pre- and post-test scores although the mean score on the post-test was higher than the pre-test score for each scale (see Table 5). One explanation of the lack of significant differences could be that college students as a subgroup are generally more tolerant than the total population (Allport, 1958, p. 405); therefore, experiences of only 2½ months duration would not contribute greatly to increasing attitudes which were already relatively positive.

Table 4. Correlations Between Scores on Desire to Teach and Scores on Attitude for Six Categories of Special Needs Learners (n = 31)

	Categories of Learners					
	Disadvantaged	Educable Mentally Retarded	Emotionally Disturbed	Physically Handicapped	Visually Impaired	Hearing Impaired
	Desire to Teach					
Attitude	.503**	.435*	.534**	.031	.273	.404*

*$p < .05 = .355$.
**$p < .01 = .456$.

Table 5. Comparisons of Pre- and Post-test Scores on Scales of Tolerance (n = 32)

Scale	M	SD	M diff.	t
Group Description-People				
Pre-	38.56	4.73		
Post-	39.87	4.45	+1.31	1.82
Group Description-Values				
Pre-	42.97	3.45		
Post-	43.16	5.30	+ .19	.20
Group Description-Total				
Pre-	81.53	7.18		
Post-	83.03	8.29	+1.50	1.01
Policy Choice				
Pre-	63.41	6.58		
Post-	63.66	6.73	+ .25	.20

Semantic differential. With nine categories of special needs learners and three factors, 27 pairs of mean scores resulted from the semantic differential. Of the 27 differences, 6 cases were significantly different at the .05 level of confidence. All significant scores revealed an increase in affective regard. Significant evaluative scores were recorded for hearing impaired learners. On activity and potency factors there were significant differences for visually impaired and multiple handicapped learners. Another on potency was also recorded for speech impaired (see Table 6).

Again the increase in attitudes toward the visually, hearing, and speech impaired may be explained by the perceived need for fewer adaptations required for these learners. These are physical handicaps and may be viewed more favorably for that reason. The change in regard toward students with multiple handicaps is puzzling, however, because very little time was devoted to teaching about these learners. Perhaps a lack of knowledge about the concept of multiple handicaps had an effect on the ratings of that category of learner.

Because attitudes are fairly stable (Ringness, 1975, p. 23) and difficult to change, and in particular negative attitudes are resistant to change (Allport, 1958, chap. 31), it is not surprising that more scores did not change significantly. Perhaps experiences over a greater span of time are needed to cause a change in attitudes. Perhaps a different type of experience is needed. One type of experience which has been thought to lead to more positive attitudes has been actual experience with handicapped persons (Higgs, 1975). Others have expressed caution in employing such experiences in order to change attitudes. The contact needs to be a positive experience in order for it to promote positive attitudes (Gottlieb, 1974; Kennon & Sandoval, 1978).

Table 6. Comparisons of Pre- and Post-test Scores on the Evaluative, Potency, and Activity Factors of a Semantic Differential for Several Categories of Special Needs Learners (n = 31)

Category of Learner	Evaluative Factor				Potency Factor				Activity Factor			
	M	SD	M diff.	t	M	SD	M diff.	t	M	SD	M diff.	t
Learning Disabled												
Pre-	22.00	3.58			19.35	3.89			18.32	3.46		
Post-	21.84	3.90	- .16	.24	20.48	4.07	+1.13	1.94	19.58	3.44	+1.26	1.55
Educable Mentally Retarded												
Pre-	22.03	4.07			20.29	3.98			19.64	4.66		
Post-	21.10	4.41	- .93	1.46	20.87	4.04	+ .58	.98	19.03[b]	3.46	- .61	.14
Emotionally Disordered												
Pre-	19.64	4.66			17.84	5.25			18.87	4.68		
Post-	18.84	5.28	- .80	.81	18.23[a]	4.77	+ .39	.42	17.77	5.13	-1.10	1.29
Physically Handicapped												
Pre-	23.33[a]	3.84			21.97	3.56			20.42	4.35		
Post-	23.52	4.27	+ .19	.20	22.87	3.40	+ .90	1.48	21.60[a]	3.76	+1.18	1.35

Table 6. (continued)

Category of Learner	Evaluative Factor				Potency Factor				Activity Factor			
	M	SD	M diff.	t	M	SD	M diff.	t	M	SD	M diff.	t
Visually Impaired												
Pre-	22.16	4.15			20.06	4.56			19.10	4.88		
Post-	22.35	3.89	+ .19	.32	21.52	3.68	+1.46	2.24*	20.68	3.73	+1.58	2.07*
Speech Impaired												
Pre-	21.10	4.17			19.52	3.27			18.22	4.21		
Post-	20.90	4.66	- .20	.20	21.32	3.69	+1.80	2.57*	19.29	3.87	+1.07	1.33
Disadvantaged												
Pre-	22.19	3.81			20.58	3.52			20.06	4.24		
Post-	22.45	3.53	+ .26	.36	21.74	4.04	+1.16	1.60	20.71	3.36	+ .65	.90
Hearing Impaired												
Pre-	20.67[a]	4.41			19.52	4.14			18.68	4.05		
Post-	22.35	3.62	+1.68	2.05*	21.29	4.16	+1.77	2.03	19.93	3.84	+1.25	1.55
Multiply Handicapped												
Pre-	19.00[a]	5.48			17.67[a]	5.05			17.63[a]	5.55		
Post-	20.36[a]	5.12	+1.36	1.31	19.87[a]	5.61	+2.20	2.22*	19.63[a]	4.67	+2.00	2.23*

[a] n = 30.
[b] n = 29.
*p <.05 = 2.04.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Based on the results of this study, it was concluded that preservice teachers' attitudes can be changed through a course on teaching learners with special needs. Further, this change was usually in a positive direction. Any conclusions drawn from this study are of necessity tenuous. And although it may be assumed the course made a difference on subjects' attitudes, by no means is causality inferred. Other influences which were unknown to the investigator were undoubtedly occurring during the time of the course that could have contributed to or even been the sole cause of the attitude change.

Limitations

Limitations to the study included the sample. Because of its small size and because it was restricted to Home Economics Education majors, its generalizability is limited. Another limitation was the instruments used. Although the semantic differential is widely used and considered valid and reliable, the other instruments were not previously tested for reliability. Validity has been established for the scales of tolerance but not for the rating scales on desire to teach and on competency. In addition, the instruments may not have been robust enough to detect small changes in attitude. A third limitation is that all subjects did not experience the same activities

during the study. One project involved options and one option was first-hand contact with handicapped persons. This could have differentially affected attitudes.

Implications

This study has implications for both preservice and inservice teacher education. Because teacher attitude is so important in effective education and because teacher attitude toward special needs learners is not always positive, changing attitudes in a positive direction needs to be one of the objectives of any preservice or inservice teacher education program. Further, it appears that a course which includes specific activities designed to change attitudes can be an effective method of accomplishing attitude change; therefore, any preservice or inservice education must be structured to include such activities.

Because this was an exploratory study, several directions for further research are indicated. Background variables such as personal or family histories of exceptionalities, amounts and types of course work on or actual experiences with special needs learners, and personality factors could all affect attitudes. Attitude change was measured but not behavioral change. Does a change in attitude as measured by some type of instrument mean that special needs learners will then be treated any differently in a classroom situation? This, after all, is the ultimate desired change.

The question of which method of attitude change-affective, cognitive, or modeling--could have contributed to attitude change, or to what degree each contributed was not answered. The resolution of this question could help to determine what types of preservice or inservice instruction are needed

to ensure that integration of special needs learners in regular classes is successful. Although some research has been done regarding attempts to modify teachers' attitudes employing various kinds of educational experiences, the question of how much time can and should be allotted and which skills need to be acquired has not been adequately answered (Alexander & Strain, 1978, pp. 395-396).

These questions are important in order for the spirit as well as the letter of the law to be implemented. If teachers are not prepared for mainstreaming or if they are unaccepting of students, the success of mainstreaming is lessened and it is the special needs learners who will then lose rather than gain the opportunities that in the past were often denied to them.

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APPENDIX

'SCALES OF TOLERANCE

College of Home Economics
North Dakota State University

GROUP DESCRIPTION SCALE

Directions: Each item is a statement about ethnic groups. Consider an ethnic group to be a collection of people who have in common religion, racial origin, national origin, language or cultural traditions.

Read each statement. On your answer sheet, indicate whether you agree or disagree with each statement, as follows:

1. strongly agree
2. agree
3. no opinion
4. disagree
5. strongly disagree

Block out one alternative for each statement. For example:

1 2 3 4 5

There are no right or wrong answers, so answer each question with your honest opinion.

1. I know of an ethnic group where many members are successful in making a living for themselves and their families.

2. Some ethnic groups are terrifying.

3. There is one ethnic group in particular whose people are not job-worthy.

4. There are some ethnic groups whose members are ill-tempered by nature.

5. There is one ethnic group whose people are extremely bright.

6. The people of some ethnic groups are more primitive in their physical development than others.

7. Some people from many ethnic groups are sneaky.

8. There is one superior ethnic group.

9. Some people of various ethnic groups, are thrifty.

10. There are people of every ethnic group who are creative.

11. Various people from any ethnic group have moral values.

12. If an ethnic group has good values, then the people are all good people.

13. The people of my ethnic group are the most logical because our values are the most reasonable.

14. Many people from various ethnic groups, hold different values because of their individual social background.

15. Some ethnic groups of people are not very bright as evidenced by the ridiculous values they hold.

16. The people of an ethnic group who hold the same values may be of very different character from each other.

17. The people of one ethnic group, in particular, are bad citizens as a result of the values they hold.

18. You can tell which ethnic group certain people belong to because their values are all based on clean living.

19. People of one ethnic group may hold many different values.

20. The values of an ethnic group are a measure of the intellectual level of the people of that group.

College of Home Economics
North Dakota State University

POLICY CHOICE

Directions: Each of these statements reflects a policy which you may or may not be in favor of. For each statement, mark one of the numbers on your answer sheet as follows:

1. If you are strongly in favor of the statement
2. if you are mildly in favor of the statement
3. if you are mildly opposed to the statement
4. if you are strongly opposed to the statement

For example:

1		2		3		4

There are no right or wrong answers.

1. People should be prevented from building homes that are so extreme and ugly that they "spoil" the neighborhood.

2. Students should be allowed to dress as they please when they come to school, even though some may look sloppy and unkempt.

3. Some topics should not be considered for inclusion in the public school curriculum even though students may be interested in them.

4. In deciding what texts and other books should and should not be used in the school, a variety of people should be consulted--parents, teachers, students, and community leaders, etc.

5. Welfare assistance should not be offered to people who are lazy and irresponsible.

6. If a person wishes to date persons of another race, other students should not put pressure upon him or her not to do so.

7. People should be free to maintain the appearance of their home as well or poorly as they wish--as long as it doesn't constitute a health hazard, regardless of what the neighbors think.

8. School social activities should be planned so students from poorer families can attend without undue financial burden.

9. The schools should not select teachers who hold unpopular political beliefs.

10. People should not be allowed to refuse to serve in the armed forces because of religious beliefs.

11. Civil rights demonstrations and racial group rallies should not be permitted on the campus of a public high school.

12. Some form of public assistance should be available to all who need it.

13. Religious fanatics should not be allowed to use public streets and parks because they are inappropriate places to conduct their services.

14. If a student's religion does not permit him to pledge allegiance to the American flag, the school should respect the belief.

15. A student who comes to school dressed so sloppily that it offends his teacher should be sent home to change his clothes.

16. High School art students should be allowed to express themselves in their artwork in any way acceptable to the instructors, even though some of the products might be termed "pornographic" by some.

17. The world is too full of ugliness. People should not be allowed to produce cars, buildings, clothing, etc. which are purely practical but which have no "beauty".

18. People who feel very strongly about their religious beliefs should not be prohibited from preaching whenever and to whomever they please.

19. Political beliefs should not determine whether a teacher is to be hired or fired.

20. Students who do not speak English as their native language should be required to speak fluent English before being permitted to attend a public school.

21. Students from ethnic groups should be permitted to hold "peaceful" meetings and demonstrations on the campus to encourage other students' understanding of their culture group.

SAMPLE ITEM FROM THE SEMANTIC DIFFERENTIAL

Teaching a learning disabled child in my classroom makes me feel:

LARGE	____:____:____:____:____:____:____:	SMALL
UNPLEASANT	____:____:____:____:____:____:____:	PLEASANT
FAST	____:____:____:____:____:____:____:	SLOW
LITTLE	____:____:____:____:____:____:____:	BIG
STANDING	____:____:____:____:____:____:____:	RUNNING
HAPPY	____:____:____:____:____:____:____:	SAD
WEAK	____:____:____:____:____:____:____:	STRONG
GOOD	____:____:____:____:____:____:____:	BAD
MOVING	____:____:____:____:____:____:____:	STILL
WORTHLESS	____:____:____:____:____:____:____:	VALUABLE
NOT ACTIVE	____:____:____:____:____:____:____:	ACTIVE
SHARP	____:____:____:____:____:____:____:	DULL

Additional concepts:

educable mentally retarded
emotionally disordered
physically handicapped
visually impaired
speech impaired
disadvantaged
hearing impaired
multiply handicapped

SAMPLE ITEM FROM THE RATING SCALE ON
PERCEIVED FEELINGS OF COMPETENCY
AND ON DESIRE TO TEACH

Directions: Several teaching situations are described below. Read each situation and respond on the two scales that follow. For each scale circle the number that best describes your reaction to the situation. The word class means a class in the field in which you are preparing to teach.

Because of P.L. 94-142, you now have several educable mentally retarded students in your classes who were previously in special education classes only.

A. Feelings of competence

5	4	3	2	1
Competent or adequate to the task				Incompetent or inadequate to the task

B. Desire for the task

5	4	3	2	1
Want to do this	Willing to try		Would rather not do this	Not willing to do this